



Modal Verbs with Examples

Modals, or modal verbs, are special verbs that act differently from normal verbs like study, work or play. Modals provide more information about how the main verb function. They have a several varieties of communicative functions.

Examples of modal verbs:

- You **must** study hard to succussed.
- **Can** you help me with my homework?
- **May** I have a cup of tea please!
- **Could** you close the window?
- You **must** be quite during exams.

Characteristics of modal verbs:

- Modals stay as they are. They never change their form that is to say you cannot add endings such as “s” “ed” or “ing”.
- They are always followed by an infinitive without the bar infinitive “to”.
- The use of modal verbs allows speakers to express ability, obligation, certainty possibility, etc.

List of modal verbs in English:

Can, may, will, would, shall, should, must, could.

When to use modal verbs?

Modal verbs can be used to express:

- 1. Permission**
- 2. Ability**
- 3. Obligation**
- 4. Prohibition**
- 5. Lack of necessity**
- 6. Advice**
- 7. possibility**
- 8. probability**

Modal verbs with examples

The following table contains all modal verbs in English along with expressing and examples for each:

Modal Verb	Expressing	Example
Between	Strong obligation	You must stop when the traffic lights turn red.
	logical conclusion / Certainty	He must be very tired. He's been working all day long.
Can	ability	I can swim.
	permission	Can I use your phone please?
	possibility	Smoking can cause cancer.
Could	ability in the past	When I was younger, I could run fast.

Modal Verb	Expressing	Example
	polite permission	Excuse me, could I just say something?
	possibility	It could rain tomorrow!
May	permission	May I use your phone please?
	possibility, probability	It may rain tomorrow!
Might	polite permission	Might I suggest an idea?
	possibility, probability	I might go on holiday to Australia next year.
Need not	lack of necessity/absence of obligation	I need not buy tomatoes. There are plenty of tomatoes in the fridge.
Should/ought to	50 % obligation	I should / ought to see a doctor. I have a terrible headache.
	advice	You should / ought to revise your lessons
	logical conclusion	He should / ought to be very tired. He's been working all day long.
Had better	Advice	You 'd better revise your lessons